



# NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES

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## INDEPENDENCE DAY STATEMENT FROM CALIFORNIA TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES

One hundred and eighty years ago today, on Independence Day, July 4, 1826, Thomas Jefferson died. We regard Jefferson as one of the noblest founders of American Democracy – surely its staunchest defender and sternest critic.

Thomas Jefferson was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, the audacious and eloquent declaration of this nation's birth.

Of all the founders of this nation, he – in words penned in 1776 – most splendidly expressed the ideals of American Democracy:

He wrote that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

I believe with all my heart in the values of democracy that Jefferson laid out. They created a nation utterly unlike any that had come before, that has stood for honesty, responsibility and fair play, that has brought out the noblest virtues in those who have served it.

We must continue to ensure that our leaders take into their souls Jefferson's simple, elegant truth that, "The art of governing consists simply of being honest, exercising common sense, following principle, and doing what is right and just."

This Independence Day is also a time we must remember the 14,000 men and women of the California Army and Air National Guard who have been called to the front lines to defend America. Today, nearly 1,600 California Guard members are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan or in support positions to those troops.

Twenty of these brave California Guard members have lost their lives in Iraq in this service to our nation, and many others have been wounded. Many more Californians in all branches of the nation's military have also placed their lives on the line in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In all, more than 250 Californians have died in this service and many others have been wounded.

Another American leader in a time of strife, Abraham Lincoln, spoke of the sacred debt the country owed to those who fought in the nation's defense: "Let us strive," said Lincoln, "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan..."

The shame is that currently, except when on active duty, one in five of these National Guard members has no health insurance, a figure that rises to 40 percent for junior enlisted men and women. Benefits for California's National Guard members are among the nation's worst and the California Guard is facing difficulty recruiting new members.

Among Thomas Jefferson's deepest beliefs was that of the importance of providing all people, rich or poor, with a sound education.

He professed that knowledge is the heart of democracy and education its source, saying, "Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government."

To accomplish this he proposed a free elementary education for all, warning that, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free... it expects what never was and never will be."

In California, our own tradition of public education has rarely been at greater risk. Our schools are overcrowded. We face a shortage of qualified teachers. A recent study by the RAND Corporation found California's K-12 system to be near the bottom among the states in every objective category.

In higher education, tuition and fee increases are pricing many California students out of the market. Since 1990, the University of California and California State University have experienced increases of 350 percent in tuition and fees. Community college fees have doubled in just the past three years.

California's prosperity rests on the bedrock of public education. The resources we put into our primary and secondary system of public education are the dues we pay to live in a democracy. We must fully fund education and make college affordable or we will imperil our prosperity and technological leadership.

Thomas Jefferson said that free societies are organized for the happiness and prosperity of their people. That is the heart of the American dream. That is the heart of the California dream.

I have an unshakable faith in the wisdom and will of the people of California to make the brave and daring choices that will make those dreams into reality.

I believe, as Thomas Jefferson said with such passion, that "The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."

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